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Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: April Report

Herald of Truth

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Churches of Christ—
Salute You
with a



April Report
1954

Herald of Truth

Our Radio Program

Dear Brethren:

May 13, 1954

There are two reasons why we are now on twenty Du Mont TV Stations instead of all the sixty-two target stations first selected:

First reason: After paying for the thirteen films now being run, we had only enough money to buy time from 20 to 25 stations.

Second reason: Both radio and television networks sell time subject to their ability to clear the time requested on each station. Because of the great demand for TV time, it is a slow process of clearing stations for the new programs. As it stands now, the company has been able to clear the desirable time on about twenty stations. A client is fortunate when the Du Mont Network can clear a station immediately after his order is placed.

Most all worthwhile objectives are reached by way of overcoming difficulties which always impede progress. We feel confident that if the brethren will be patient, understanding, and prayerful in our behalf, that we will move slowly, but surely, toward the ultimate goal of a nation-wide TV gospel broadcast.

We have had a few letters expressing disappointment because the HOME STATION was not among the few to clear for the first telecasts. We can understand your disappointment, for we could not get clearance here in Abilene and may not for a long time.

Compared to radio, it takes a great deal of money to prepare the films and buy TV time, but if most of the twelve thousand Churches of Christ in the Nation could help in a very moderate way, we could reach our goal of 62 or more stations in a reasonable time.

We are in very urgent need of funds NOW for building films for the next quarter and to pay for station time as it can be cleared. If you can help us financially to any extent, let us hear from you at once.

Yours in the Lord's Work,
Elders
Highland Church of Christ
Abilene, Texas

John E. Kingdon
Box 257
Hitchcock, So. Dakota

The Herald of Truth
P. O. Box 1858
Abilene, Texas
Dear Brethren:

I received your letter of June 10 and would appreciate any sermons that you can send us that have been given in 1953. Brother James K. Lewis brought 1952 sermons and we still have a few on hand.

We have received quite a number of contacts through the Herald of Truth radio program from all corners of the state. Four of these contacts were isolated members of the church. Perhaps the most unusual contact we've made comes from the northern part of the state. A community church after hearing the Herald of Truth, asked that a preacher be sent them. They also made a contribution to help defray local radio expense. This would have been a splendid opportunity for the church had there been a preacher in the state of South Dakota to go. Since the closest minister was in a neighboring state, two other men of the congregation and I drove up and held services one Sunday night. Because of the great distance we are not able to make frequent trips. I repeat this is a splendid opportunity for the church if only we had someone to send. We also contacted two members of the church through the Herald of Truth who had been isolated from the church for about 20 years. It's been a great encouragement to them in contact with church members again.

Other requests for sermons have come in from such a wide area that it has been impossible to follow them up by personal contact as we have no one to devote full time to this work.

We want to urge you to keep up the good work with the Herald of Truth; it is of vital importance to us in this area where the church is just starting. Before the Herald of Truth program came on, we had great difficulty in obtaining good radio programs and used some of them as much as four times. We are grateful to the Highland elders for these programs.

Yours in Christ,
John E. Kingdon

Miranda, So. Dakota

Dear Friends,

Please send me two copies of last Sunday's sermon—it is one of the best sermons we have ever heard.

May we thank you for sending our names to the Church of Christ, Huron, South Dakota. They have been to see us several times. We were baptized three weeks ago and feel that we have found what we have searched for for years.

Evangelist Bill Hearn and his wife now plan to visit us once a week for Bible study. We are 80 miles from Huron but it doesn't seem far when we can meet each Sunday with Christians such as those in Huron's Church of Christ.

Sincerely,
Mr and Mrs. Willard Tanner

Financial Statement

APRIL 1954

RECEIPTS:

Paid on Pledges	\$30,192.43	
Contributions	7,554.02	
Transcriptions	400.00	
Miscellaneous	72.60	
Total receipts for April, '54		\$38,219.05

EXPENDITURES:

Broadcasting Expense:

Tape recording	1,090.88	
Radio Time	24,370.26	25,461.14

Wages 3,628.81

Publicity 4.75

Office Expense:

Insurance	80.57	
Mail Room	553.83	
Rent	150.00	
Office Supplies	88.40	
Utilities	22.09	
Tel. & Tel.	128.66	
Printing	614.13	
Social Security Exp.	51.57	
Miscellaneous	50.00	1,739.25

Total expenditures for April, '54 30,833.95

Receipts exceed expenditures by \$ 7,385.10

He Taketh Away the First

By James D. Willeford

No. 114

April 4, 1954

A few days ago a friend of mine stood in a crowded air terminal waiting for his plane to be called. There was the usual last minute confusion, with friends and relatives on hand to wish "farewell" to the travelers about to board their flights. But my friend's attention was particularly drawn to a happy young couple, newlyweds, obviously starting on their honeymoon.

He could read in their eyes the love that had brought them together and on their faces was the anticipation of a happy future as they watched the landing field where one of the giant planes would soon be ready to take them away.

The young couple said their goodbyes. They embraced their parents they had loved these many years. The bride kissed her mother and father, and then taking hold of her new husband's hand, she accompanied him aboard the plane. The old affections, the old discipline, was being replaced by a new bond which would unite this young couple in the fulfillment of their marriage vows.

The plane took off, leaving the beloved parents to watch them go, and to bless their new venture. And as the plane gained altitude and soared through the sun-pierced clouds, this wedding seemed for the young couple to be the culmination of all that had gone before. Everything to now had been a preparation for the new and better life ahead.

My friend was settled in a seat on the same plane not too far behind the young couple. He was musing on the transition from the old life to the new even as he opened the book he held in his hand. The book was his "traveling companion"—a copy of the Bible he was bringing as a gift to his mother. And as the book opened, his eyes focused first on a page which read "The Old Testament" and then a dividing page which opened the "New Testament." The "Old Testament"—the inspired word of God—was binding until the New Testament came to take its place.

The New Testament—the word of Christ who bade us leave all worldly things and come to Him. Just as the young couple in reluctance bade farewell to the old so that they could claim their future, so we in following the New Testament must be free of the shackles of the old. For our eternity, our everlasting happiness at the end of our journey through life, depends upon our willingness to make a clean break with all of our old allegiances, and our willingness to accept Christ's words of the New Testament as the only course of salvation.

When you pick up the Bible you observe that it consists of two parts, the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament was God's covenant with His people before Christ. It was binding upon the children of Israel until Christ gave a new testament to take its place.

That Christ would give a new testament is made clear with-

in the Old Testament itself. In the book of Jeremiah we read, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (Jer. 31:31,32). The Lord foretold that He would give His people a new covenant which would differ from the first one, and the inspired penmen of the New Testament say he kept his word. The writer of the Hebrew letter said, "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:9, 10).

The Old Testament was God's first written will, and it was given to the seed of Abraham. The New Testament is God's second will, and it was given by Christ to all the sons of men.

The Old Testament was not adequate for man's redemption from sin. We read in Heb. 10:1, 4, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." It took the blood of Jesus Christ to redeem man from sin and that is why Paul tells us in Hebrews 10:10 that it is by the New Testament "we are sanctified."

After the old law was taken away, the Lord knew that men would be likely to ask why it had been given, and so He said, "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (Gal. 3:19). According to this statement the law was added to curb sin, and it was to last till the seed should come. The Lord identifies the seed as Christ (Gal. 3:16). So the law was to last until sometime during the sojourn of Christ upon the earth, and then it was to cease to be a binding rule for the Lord's people.

In the Colossian letter the Lord gives us the exact time at which the first covenant was taken away. He said Christ "took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross" (Col. 2:14). This is what Paul had in mind when he said, "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second" (Heb. 10:9). It was necessary for God to take away the Old Testament that He might give us the New Testament. A testament is a will and God cannot have two different wills in force at the same time. The old will had to go in order that a place might be made for the new will. And Paul says that this exchange happened when Christ died on the cross.

After the Old Testament was taken away as a binding law the apostle Paul said, "Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held" (Rom. 7:6). He identified the law he had in mind by quoting one of the ten commandments (Rom. 7:7).

In speaking of the Old Testament an inspired apostle of Christ said, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24, 25). The Old Testament was a temporary means which God provided to curb sin, and to prepare His people for the coming of Christ. When God's purpose was fulfilled, He took it away, nailing it to the cross of calvary.

In reading the first four books of the New Testament many seem unaware that they are reading about events that transpired under the Old Testament. Christ lived all during his life with the law of Moses still in full force, and he Himself obeyed the commands of that law. When He was eight days of age He was circumcised, and sacrifices were offered "according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons" (Lk. 2:24). It was in obedience to the Old Testament that Christ kept the Passover Feast, and other Jewish holy days. Christ took part in the temple worship, and He entered into the synagogue services. He also observed the law which required that a leper who was healed must show himself to a Jewish priest (Luke 17:14). Why did the Lord do these things? He did them because He lived while the law of Moses was still in force, and since God gave it, He was obligated to keep it. But what follower of Christ would offer sacrifices, and keep the Passover Feast today? Not one would do it, and not one would be obliged to do it since the death of Christ, for at that time the Lord took away the first testament.

There are many people who go back to the personal ministry of Christ to find the plan of salvation. They read where the Lord forgave people when He saw their faith, and they conclude that all we must do to be saved is to believe. They read the Lord's promise to the thief on the cross that, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," and they conclude that he was saved by faith without baptism.

But the thief on the cross is not a pattern for us today, because he lived before the New Testament went into force. The Lord said, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Heb. 9:16, 17). No will or testament ever went into force until the person who made it died. Jesus is the testator of the New Testament, and it must follow as a logical conclusion that while Christ lived on the earth, the new Testament was not in force. But if we are saved, it must be by the will of Christ. This fact is plainly stated by Paul when he said, "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second; By the which will we have been sanctified" (Heb. 10:9, 10). So, we are saved by the second testament and not the first. The thief lived and died while the first testament was in force and we live under a different law from that under which he lived, and his case cannot be used as a pattern for us today. The New Testament demands baptism for the remission of sins, and this fact cannot be set aside by objecting to it on the ground the thief was not baptized.

The thief is not a pattern for us today because he died before Christ gave His Great Commission. After the Lord's resurrection, He commanded the apostles to "Go...and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28: 19). The thief died before this order was ever given. If men use the thief on the cross as an example of salvation without baptism, why not use the palsied man who was saved on the faith of the four men

who brought him to Christ? Matthew says, "And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. 9:2).

If we can go back of the cross and use the thief as an example for us, we can use any other example or command given in the Old Testament. I should like to ask anyone who uses the thief on the cross as an example if he is willing to go back of the cross, and obey such commands as these: "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbor shall release it: he shall not exact it of his neighbor or of his brother; because it is called the Lord's release" (Deut. 15:1, 2). "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 16:1). "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence" (Deut. 22:8). In the Old Testament is also found the command to be circumcised. Perhaps you will say, "Of course we do not obey these commands," but may I ask "Why not?" These commands are in the Old Testament, and it was binding until Christ died on the cross. I believe you can see from this why we should not go back of the cross to the thief, and use him as an example for us. We are to obey the commission of our Lord in which He commands us to believe and to be baptized in order to be saved. This is a part of the New Testament and it alone is binding upon us.

Sad to say, there are many things practised today in Christian worship for which there is no authority in the Testament of Christ. Those who practice these things try to justify them by the Old Testament. Incense is burned in some churches, and this is justified by the burning of incense under the law of Moses. It is suggested that since the Israelites used incense in their worship it is all right for us to use it in our worship. But the children of Israel were required to offer animal sacrifices. May we do the same? The Lord said the Israelite "shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev. 3:2). May we do this because the people of God did it under God's first covenant?

Some have an elevated priesthood, and they feel it is justified because they read of priests in the Old Testament. They ignore the fact that according to the New Testament all Christians are priests of God (I Pet. 2:5, 9). The apostle says the Lord's people are to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Others follow the practice of sprinkling water upon people for baptism, and in trying to justify it they refer to the sprinkling of blood in the Old Testament. The sprinkling done in Old Testament days had nothing to do with baptism. In the New Testament the Lord says we are buried with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3, 4).

When men go back to the first testament for their authority in anything they do in religion they are returning to a cove-

nant which has been taken away, blotted out, and nailed to the cross (Heb. 10:9, Col. 2:14). They have become entangled with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). If they obey one command of the first testament they are bound to obey all the commands of that testament. Paul said to the Galatians, "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. 5:3).

The Old Testament is no longer binding upon us because we now have the testament of the Lord Jesus. The Lord said He took away the first in order that He might establish the second; and it is by the will of Christ that we are sanctified (Heb. 10:9, 10).

The New Testament is the will of Christ and if we ever inherit the blessings he has promised, we must meet the conditions of His will. Christ becomes the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Heb. 5:9). The steps of faith which we must take are clearly stated within the Lord's will. Christ says we must hear His word, believe in Him, repent of our sins, and be buried with Him in baptism (Mk. 16:16, Lk. 24:47; and Romans 6:4). When the Son of God made His will, He knew what He had to offer us, and He had the right to state the conditions whereupon we inherit His blessings. We become an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ when we accept and obey the will of God's Son. Are you ready to accept this heritage which is without parallel?

Foolishness of God

James W. Nichols

No. 116

April 18, 1954

Does it not seem a blasphemous utterance, "the foolishness of God"? In every sense but the one of which we speak it is absurd and preposterous for man to speak of the foolishness of God.

Do not think for one moment that I have accused God of being foolish, but in the words of the apostle Paul, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than man; but God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong." (I Cor. 1:25-29). This particular passage speaks in no uncertain terms of God's foolishness and explicitly states that God does use "foolish" things to accomplish His purpose; foolishness, that is, in the sight of man and according to man's reason.

But God has a purpose in His use of foolish things. It is not merely a whim or a practical joke with Him. In verse 29 Paul says that the purpose of this is "that no flesh should glory in His presence."

I suppose we can call it human nature, that disposition to glory in our own pitiful wisdom. It is almost impossible to relate some news in any circle without someone saying, "Well, I already knew about that. I had advance information." How often have we heard the expression, "I told you so."? Regardless as to its relation to truth, it is merely an evidence of the desire of man to exalt personal wisdom.

Now God in His dealing with man leaves no room for nature's "I told you so." God's ways are so designed that no man feels himself of the disposition to give credit unto himself for any advance knowledge of God's plans.

In every age, from the beginning of time, God has required of men some act, some deed for which man could see no reason—some foolish act. Bible students recall quite well, as recorded in Numbers the 21st chapter, how that when the Israelites were bitten by fiery serpents and were dying by the thousands God's cure was foolish in the eyes of men. God had Moses make a serpent of brass, place it at the top of a pole. God then said that for those who had been bitten by the serpents to be healed they must look upon it.

Now could you imagine some Israelite saying, "I told you so. That's just what I have been thinking about for some time. I knew that that would heal us"? I am certain that there was no one who would have claimed to have originated this idea, because it was contrary to every phase of human reasoning.

There was not claimed for this serpent of brass that it produced an anti-toxin serum or that by any means of chemistry, science, or medicine the Israelites would be healed.

Yet all those who looked upon the serpent were healed. This was just one of the many foolish things of God's choosing.

You also remember the story of Naaman as it is so vividly told in II Kings 5. Naaman was a great man, a man of valor, captain of the host of the King of Syria, but he was afflicted with terrible disease, leprosy. Leprosy is a disease by which a man's flesh will die and literally fall off of his bones. I am sure that even Naaman with his bravery was perhaps a little bit panic-stricken as he applied every known science and found that it was to no avail. Then he heard of possible hope, a prophet of Israel.

He first went to the king of Israel with gold and silver and changes of raiment, but his hopes were soon dashed. For the king, though he was the leader and the ruler, was not able to heal a leper. But then he gained new hope, as he received word from the prophet to come. By faith I can almost see Naaman as he arrived before the house of Elisha, with his chariots and his servants, and changes of raiment with much gold and silver to pay for his cure.

Though Naaman surely realized that he was a leper and that all that he had been able to do was to no avail, he still felt quite proud of himself and of his own importance as he sent his servant to command this prophet to come out and cleanse him.

But, lo, the servant returned without the prophet. "What kind of impudence is this? Does he not know who I am—Captain of the host of the king of Syria?" And then Naaman hears the command of the prophet to go dip himself seven times in the River Jordan. Did Naaman then say, "Oh, yes, that is a good suggestion. I have been thinking for some time that I should try that." On the contrary, the scriptures say that Naaman was wroth and said, "Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand over the place and recover the leper."

Naaman had his own plans. He felt that he had advance knowledge of how that he would be cleansed. And when it was not according to his plans or to his reasoning, he was beside himself in anger. Such foolishness! Could you blame him? Would you have reacted any differently? Viewing from the point of man's wisdom, what could be more ridiculous? There was nothing in the river Jordan—no chemical that would cleanse a leper. Yet when Naaman came to his senses and obeyed this foolish command of God the Scripture says he was healed.

I wonder if in the books of military strategy you would find the tactics required by Jehovah of Joshua in the taking of the city of Jericho. Do you think for one moment that the marching around a city protected by mighty walls such as Jericho would cause those walls to crumble? Yet the walls

did crumble when God's foolish command was obeyed, as found in Joshua 6.

Once when a blind man came to Jesus crying for the healing power of the Savior, Jesus made some clay from the dirt and His spittle and plastered the man's eyes with it. He then told him to go to the Pool of Siloam and bathe his eyes. Can you see that blind man as he, stumbling, hurried to the pool?

Can you hear the questions of those he passed by as they beheld his clay-smeared eyes? "Where are you going?"

"To the Pool of Siloam."

"But why?"

"Why, I'll be able to see then."

I wonder how many of his friends would have suggested, "I have been thinking of that for some time. That is a prescription that I have been working on for some time." Oh, no. It was contrary to every man's thinking—utter foolishness. It is told in John the ninth chapter that this foolish action brought sight to those eyes that had never before seen the light.

We are told that "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." (I Cor. 1:18). What foolishness is required of a sinner in order to obtain his salvation?

Faith is a prerequisite of salvation. The writer of Hebrews tells us in Heb. 11:6 that no man can come to God without faith. Paul and Silas plainly stipulated as a condition of pardon in Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." Christ Himself said in John 3:18, "He that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. But this cannot be classified as 'foolishness.' I am sure that there is not a person in this vast audience today that could not readily account for the necessity of faith. I am sure that there is not a one of us that would not have thought of this had we been in the position of God.

Repentance is another necessity for redemption. Paul says in Acts 17:30, "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." The Lord said, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3.) Repentance merely means a turning away or facing around in mind and heart and life. This is not difficult to understand. The sinner traveling away from everything on the path of sin must be induced to turn first in mind and then in life, that he might reach Heaven.

The command of confession is not a difficult one either. Christ said in Matt. 10:32-33, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven."

Human wisdom could demand no less than that one who is to receive life everlasting should without hesitation confess his faith in the giver of life.

But our Lord has placed in the scheme of redemption one command for which we must frankly admit there is no human reason. From the standpoint of man's wisdom and reasoning it appears as utter foolishness. You know that to which I refer—baptism.

Even though I know that Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," in Mark 16:16, and that Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said in Acts 2:38, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."—even though there rings through my heart the words of the apostle Paul as he related his own conversion in Acts 22:16 and told how that Ananias said, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name"—even though as I read every act of conversion in God's Word it tells me how that men were baptized before they were saved, and even though I know that Peter says in I Peter 3:21, "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism." I still cannot see within this command any human reason or logic. Yet I cannot misunderstand the commands. They are plain and simple. There is no means by which I can twist them to mean anything else other than just exactly what **they say.**

I am still made to ask from human nature, "Why? Certainly there is no saving power in baptism. Water cannot take away the stain of sin. Will being baptized change my personality? Will it make me a better man? Is there any wisdom in it?"

But then I remember Naaman and Moses and Joshua and the blind man and many others, and I hear the words of the apostle Paul that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men" and my only conclusion is that this is another case of God's selecting a "foolish" thing that "no flesh should glory in His presence." God saved us through faith in Him, an overwhelming faith.

It requires no great faith to do that for which I can see reason. For even if an enemy should suggest for me to do something for which I can see reason, I would be foolish to reject it. You know, I have to believe in a person with all of my strength to do that for which I can see no reason. How many times has a boy or a girl sat at the knee of father or mother and heard them give some kindly advice and say in return, "I can't understand it. I can just see no reason in it. If anyone else had suggested it I would not even consider it. But because that you give it I will take your advice."

Though I cannot see in baptism any reason from the human standpoint, when I hear God tell me that when I

am baptized I can obtain forgiveness of sins, I simply want to say, "Father, I don't understand it, but I have every confidence, all faith, in your love and in your way and I will obey you." If I should refuse, would I not then be refusing to walk by faith and do only that which I can understand? Hear Paul: "And the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are." (I Cor. 1:28). **My friends, there is no saving power in baptism of itself. Power in the water simply does not exist. Sin is real. It is one of those things which are, and God has chosen the saving power of baptism (a thing which is not) to bring to nought sin (a thing which is.)**

Sinner friend, I know you want to be saved. Will you then by faith today step forth and obey Him? Whether you understand it or can comprehend it or not, when God speaks remember that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Reconciliation

James Walter Nichols

No. 115

April 11, 1954

The words of II Cor. 5:20, "Be ye reconciled to God," are at the same time a declaration of privilege, a summons and an exhortation.

A declaration of supreme privilege—we may be reconciled to God.

It is an extraordinary summons of an ambassador of Jesus Christ, to lay down the weapons of unholy warfare and to accept God Almighty as King.

It is an exhortation. There is great pathos in that world reconciliation. Reconciliation throbs with the passion of a great heart. It is wet with the tears of the Savior. It is the cry of a heart that throbs almost to the breaking over the sins of men.

Here it again, "Be ye reconciled to God." Very few religious men have failed to come in contact with the word reconciliation in their studies and reading, but how so very few of us really understand what is contained in this mighty word.

The first bitter word we meet is alien. Alien means, not a part of: alien to the commonwealth of Israel, alien to the Citizenship of the Kingdom of Heaven, alien with no claim to the high privilege of God's children.

We are proud to be citizens of the United States of America, and of this we boast. But even a greater privilege it is to have a citizenship in the Heavens of which the writer of Hebrews refers to as the "City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Aliens to this nation, however, have no right as citizens of this nation, and an alien to God has not the right to the citizenship of this "Heavenly Jerusalem." Not long ago I saw a picture of an alien family having just landed with all their earthly belongings. They were bewildered by a strange land with strange customs and a strange tongue. As aliens they have not the rights of freedom that the citizen enjoys. My heart cried out to help them. And when I see aliens to God, again my soul yearns to give them help. The alien is unreconciled to God.

But there is an even darker word involved, and this word is rebel. Not only are we aliens if we are unreconciled to God, but we are rebels, having once been in covenant relationship with God, but by our own will have disowned the authority. If we have not been reconciled to God then we have lifted the banner of revolt and are at war with heaven.

The history of mankind has been a dark sequence of revolt and alienation. From the very dawn of mankind, from Adam on down, men have rejected, rebelled, cursed and blasphemed God. Paul said in Romans the third chapter, verses 10 through 23, "as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none that understandeth; there is none that

seeketh after God; they have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one: their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips; . . . for all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God."

It may be that there is some brazen soul in the audience who will have the audacity to say that "I am not a rebel against God." May I ask would you be willing to kneel down by the cradle and try to pray this prayer: "Oh God, bless my child and grant that it may become like me. Grant that it may follow in my foot-steps. Grant that it may become just the man I am." You know that a prayer such as this would blister your tongue. Your prayer rather: "Oh God, bless my baby, and may it come in to a life far better than my own."

The word reconciliation contains something more than this. It contains light by which we may see through those dark shadows of fear. Reconciliation carries with it hope for the alien. Reconciliation means all that the word peace could ever mean, and thanks be to God, we can be reconciled to God because of his tremendous love. But let us get the record straight. It is man that must make peace. It is man that must lay down his weapons of rebellion and revolt.

God is just and holy. God in his infinite love and mercy provided and continues to provide man, his creature, with every blessing for which he could possibly ask, and yet man rebels and hears not the words of God, thereby in his rebellion alienates himself from God's eternal blessings. It, therefore, is man who must be reconciled to God rather than God being reconciled to man.

How does this reconciliation come? "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whoso-believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16). The apostle Paul said in Romans 5:6-11, "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly . . . But God commendeth his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." And in II Cor. 5:17-19, "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning un-

to them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

Do you get the picture? Man, a creature of God, pushed aside God's saving hand, deafened his ears to his voice and turned his eyes toward the arch enemy of God, Satan himself. Man literally turned his back on God, but God so loved you and me he gave His own Son to us that we might by his blood make peace with God.

What happens to man when he is reconciled? Since God is perfect, sinless, cannot lie, nor condone sin in any of its insidious forms, for man to be reconciled to God he must stand cleansed, made clean, free of sin.

Now friends, those of you who may think that because God's love is so great he will just push aside the balances of justice and accept you and your sinfulness—you are wrong. God is not the one to be reconciled, but "thou art the man." Now let us look at the picture again. God, perfect, sinless; man, a rebel, must be reconciled to God by being made clean. God owes no man anything, but because of his love He gives not a servant, not an animal, but his own Son's blood that you might be cleansed of your sins and stand before God reconciled.

God, perfect; man, imperfect. Man the one to be reconciled. Can you see for one moment the right of any man in a condition of rebellion and alienation saying to God, "Now God, I want to be reconciled, but I want to be reconciled the way I want to be." In other words, "I will make peace, but it will only be on my terms."

It is like the criminal standing before the judge and saying, "Now Judge, you found me guilty, but listen to me, and let me hand down the sentence." When a man or woman, a boy or girl has the attitude that they want to be reconciled to God according to their own theories and plans and doctrines it means but one thing, that they are not even ready to be reconciled. Their attitude merely manifests the depth of their rebellion. It is God who sets the standard of reconciliation. It is God who lays down the condition, not man.

Now then, a practical question: If man is the one to be reconciled, what must man do? Someone says man does not have to do anything, God has done it all. Oh, how foolish. Man, the one to be reconciled, and he has to do nothing? True, in the words of the apostle Paul, "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them."

There is nothing that we could ever do of ourselves and by ourselves to present ourselves reconciled to God. But Paul tells us in no uncertain words about this reconciliation in the seventeenth verse of II Corinthians 5: "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed

away; behold, they are become new." Man, a servant of sin and Satan, becomes a new creature in Christ. The next verse explains that if we are in Christ we are reconciled to God. He says almost the same thing in Romans the sixth chapter, verses 17 and 18: "But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching where unto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness." Who is He talking to? Those who are in Christ, for in the second verse he said, "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin."

He was talking to men and women who in the fifth chapter and tenth verse he said were reconciled to God through the death of His Son. He was speaking of those who had believed, for he wrote in Romans the tenth chapter, the eleventh verse, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame." He was writing to men and women who had repented, for he said in the second chapter, the fourth verse, "Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" He spoke to men who had confessed Christ for he wrote in Romans 10:10, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." He was talking to men and women who had been buried with their Lord in baptism, having put off the old man, no longer an alien, no longer a rebel, being a citizen of the Kingdom.

Do you get the picture completely? Man rebelled against God, the perfect one, but God in his love and infinite mercy provided a way to return and that man should stand before Him in the body of Christ, cleansed by the blood of the Savior. If a man is in Christ he is reconciled. If he is not in Christ he is an alien. And to be in Christ and to have his sins covered by the blood of Christ he must have obeyed the Savior.

Hear Paul in Galatians 3:26-27 as he makes the lesson so simple: "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." If we are children of God we are reconciled. If we are children of God we are in Christ Jesus. And if we are in Christ Jesus we have been baptized into Christ Jesus. There is no other way.

The question of today is "Are you reconciled?" If you have not been reconciled, if you have not made peace with God,

may I assure you with all the force of God's Word that this is a war you can never win. But there awaiteth for you only "a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10 27). The choice is yours. Are you willing to accept God's plan? Will you accept His way of reconciliation, or will you continue to rebel to your own destruction? The only way of reconciliation is through Jesus Christ. Will you let Him take your place for the punishment of your sins?

During the peak of the Civil War a farmer living in the state of New York was called for Army service. His wife had died and he only was left to care for a family of small children. He didn't know what to do until a young man, living near by who had no one to depend upon him, came and offered to be his substitute. The farmer, in consideration of the children, accepted the offer. The friend marched off to war. In his first battle he was shot and killed. The farmer soon heard as news of the battle came. He quickly took his horses and drove to the scene of the battle and searched until he found the body of his friend. He carried him back home and tenderly buried him, hewing out of the stones of the hills a marker, upon which he cut, "He died for me."

That can be your story today if you will in obedience accept God's way of reconciliation, Jesus, His own Son.

A Peculiar People

JAMES W. NICHOLS

No. 117

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If by a miracle you should be picked up and carried back through time some 1900 years and found yourself in the midst of a congregation of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, what would be your reaction? Apart from their customs, their dress and their language, would you feel at home or would you feel that you were among an unusual group of people, different from the religious standard to which you are accustomed?

Unfortunately I am persuaded that a vast majority of the religious people of the United States would feel completely out of place and would view the faith, practice and teaching of the Christians described in the New Testament as something peculiar or unusual!

Let us by faith be whisked through the halls of time and become acquainted with the church as it was originally established by Jesus. Many of my friends and neighbors would first of all be concerned because they would see in the hands of the Christians of the first century no written creed or man-devised confession of faith. Instead of the manuals, disciplines, prayer-books, catechisms, articles of faith and by-laws of man which are the rule of today, there would be in the hands of the Christians the word of God.

These followers of Christ would be searching diligently the prophecies of the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Luke wrote in Acts the seventeenth chapter concerning the people of Berea, "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalica, in that they received the word with all the readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." These Christians not only searched the scriptures of the Old Testament for these proofs, but also learned of God's goodness and severity of which Paul speaks in Romans the eleventh chapter.

They examined the inspired epistles of Peter and Paul, James, Jude, and John, along with the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, so that they might be thoroughly prepared for every good work. The apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." Mosheim, that outstanding church historian, said, "The whole of the Christian religion is comprehended in two great points, of which the first regards what we are to believe, and the other relates to our conduct and actions: or, to express the matter more briefly, the gospel presents to us objects of faith and rules of practice. The rule of standard of both are those books which contain the Revelation that God made of his will to persons chosen for that purpose whether before or after the birth of Christ. And these divine books are usually called *The Old and New Testament*."

"The apostles and their disciples took all possible care, and that in the earliest times of the church, that these sacred books might be in the hands of all Christians, that they might be read and explained in the assemblies of the faithful, and thus contribute, both in private and in public, to excite and nourish in the minds of Christians a fervent zeal for the truth, and a firm attachment to the ways of piety and virtue." (Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Volume 1, Chapter 3, paragraph 1, 2).

Yet the apostles went even further. They demanded that the word of God be the only basis of authority. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15-16, "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth. But shun profane babblings; for they proceed further in ungodliness."

John even further warned in 2 John 9:10, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting."

Would you not then, my friends, feel out of place with all of your books of man as you walked among men who were armed only with the Word of God which Paul calls the sword of the Spirit?

Many also would become quite disturbed when they found that these people had no earthly headquarters and no earthly hierarchy, no earthly organization of any kind other than the individual congregations as they zealously went about their mission. It is hard for people of the twentieth century to comprehend this one simple fact: that in the church established by Jesus Christ there were no synods, councils, conventions, associations, societies, or conferences composed of delegates from different congregations, creating a religious, legislative body.

Mosheim said, "The churches, in those ancient times, were entirely independent; none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one governed by its own rulers and its own laws." (Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Volume I, Chapter 2, Paragraph 14). Another outstanding historian, Neander, corroborates this in Volume 1, Page 183.

The apostle Paul told Titus, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge;" (Titus 1:5) and Luke speaks concerning Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:23, "And when they had appointed for them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed."

The congregations established by the Son of God were led by men who had met the qualifications laid down by the inspired writers. These men were called bishops, presbyters, pastors, or elders.

While there was no earthly headquarters, it should not be assumed for one moment that the many hundreds and thousands of congregations were not united under one head, for the church of the New Testament was completely imperial-

istic in that Jesus was complete ruler, being "the King of kings and Lord of lords."

Jesus himself said in Matthew 28:18, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." No room was left for authority on the part of any man. Paul said in I Tim. 6:13-15, that Christ shall appear to show "who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Paul also said concerning God and Christ in Ephesians 1:20-23, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

However paradoxical it may seem, while the church of the New Testament was imperialistic with Jesus as King, it was also completely democratic in that all men were brethren and that all men stood with equal rights before the King.

The apostle Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit said in Galatians 3:26-28, "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female, for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus."

Mosheim said, "There reigned among the members of the Christian Church, however distinguished they were by worldly rank and title, not only an amiable harmony, but also a perfect equality. . . . Whoever acknowledged Christ as the Savior of mankind, and made a solemn profession of his confidence in him, was immediately baptized and received into the church." (Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Volume I, Chapter 2, Paragraph 7) Even those who served as bishops of the congregations were commanded by the apostle Peter in I Peter 5:2-3, "Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock."

Another factor that we would find as unusual is the fact that instead of 250 denominations and sects there was only one church, that which was built by Jesus. Christ had prophesied in Matthew 16, "Upon this rock I will build my church," and Paul in speaking to the elders of the church in Ephesus as recorded in Acts 20:28, said that there was one church of the Lord which he purchased with His own blood. He further said of Christ in Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Concerning this, he stated in Ephesians 4:4, "there is one body," and again in Ephesians 2:16 he implicitly states that both Jew and Gentile are reconciled in one body unto God through the cross."

When members of the church in Corinth began to digress and to divide, Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through

the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you: or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" (I Cor. 1:10-12-13). For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men? For when one saith, I am of Paul: and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men?" (I Cor 3:3-4).

Not only was the church established by Jesus Christ, united in its practice, but they glorified the name of Christ in that they were nothing more than Christians. Luke records in the eleventh chapter of Acts, the 26th verse, that the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. The apostle Peter exhorted in I Peter 4:16, "But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name."

The church did not wear the name of man, but the church was referred to as the Church, the Church of God, the Church of the Lord, the Church of the First Born, and in Romans 16:16, speaking about a number of congregations, the apostle Paul said, "The Churches of Christ salute you."

Many others would think the church found in the New Testament unusual in that the teaching of Christ, the apostles and its members was that to obtain forgiveness of sins one must not only believe, but also repent, confess his faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and be buried in water for the remission of sins. The writer of Hebrews said in Hebrews 11:6, "and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." Paul said in Acts 17:30, "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." Paul again wrote in Romans 10:10, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." And in Mark 16:16, the Lord said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."

These penitent, baptized believers did not join any organization but were added by the Lord Himself to His Church. Luke records in Acts the second chapter, the 41st and 47th verses, "They then, that received his word were baptized; and there were added unto them in that day about three thousands souls. . . . And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved."

Paul also said in Galatians 3:26-27, "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." For many today it would be unusual to hear preached from their pulpits the New Testament truth that for one to be saved he must be in the church and for one to be in the church he must have the remission of past sins.

It would also be unusual for many should they watch the baptism of these Christians described in the New Testament to

find that it was an immersion in water. Paul refers in Romans the sixth chapter to it as a burial. Mosheim states, "The sacrament of baptism was administered in this century, without the public assemblies, in places appointed and prepared for that purpose, and was performed by immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font." (Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Volume I, Chapter 4, Paragraph 8).

Some few religious Americans would find it uncommon for the church to meet upon the first day of each week for public worship. In Acts 20:7, Luke records, And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight." Mosheim states, "All Christians were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Savior arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship." (Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Volume I, Chapter 4, Paragraph 4).

In their worship on the first day of the week they prayed even as Paul commanded in 1 Tim. 2:8, "I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing." They lifted their voices in song without the use of instruments as also commanded by Paul in Ephesians 5:19: "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." Joseph Bingham, the well known author of "Antiquities of the Christian Church" and said to be one of the most learned men the Church of England has ever produced says: "Music in churches is as ancient as the apostles, but instrumental music not so." (Works Vol. 3, p. 137). The American Encyclopedia presents this fact: "Pope Vitalian is related to have first introduced organs into some of the churches of Western Europe, about 670; but the earliest trustworthy account is that of the one sent as a present by the Greek emperor Constantine Copronymus to Pepin, king of the Franks, in 755." (Vol. 12 p. 688).

In these assemblies of public worship the scriptures were read and studied, of which Mosheim says, "In these assemblies the holy Scriptures were publicly read, and for that purpose were divided into certain portions or lessons. This part of divine service was followed by a brief exhortation to the people, in which eloquence and art gave place to the natural and fervent expression of zeal and charity." (Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Volume I, Chapter 4, Paragraph 6).

Many also would find it unusual to observe these early Christians taking of the Lord's Supper at their period of public worship on the first day of every week, of which we read a moment ago in Acts 20:7.

Others would be troubled to find that the work of the church and the needs of the poor were cared for by the contributions of the Christians as they gave according to their prosperity. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16:2, "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come." Mosheim says, "Every Christian, who was in an opulent condition, and indeed every one, according to their circumstances, brought with them their gifts, and offered them, as it were, unto

the Lord." (Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Chapter 4, Paragraph 7).

As you have walked through the pages of the New Testament and the annals of history have you found these people uncommon from your religious standards? If the church of which we have spoken today and the people of which we have read have seemed to be peculiar, it indicates but one thing: that you are not a part of the church established by the Lord Jesus.

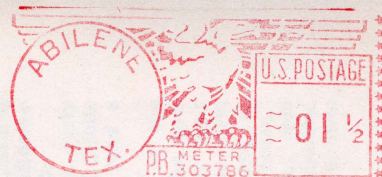
God, His way, His law, His church have not changed, but they are the same today as they were 1900 years ago. James said of God in James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." The writer of Hebrews said of Christ in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and forever."

There are over 10,000 congregations today just as those we find described by the New Testament. These congregations are made up of men and women who are as Peter described in 1 Peter 2:9, "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." The King James version translates the phrase "a people for God's own possession", "a peculiar people". Not peculiar in dress except in modesty; not peculiar in speech except in purity; but peculiar in the sense that they are set apart, worshipping, preaching, living, not by customs or dress or speech of Christians 1900 years ago, but worshipping, preaching and living according to the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are striving to be nothing more than Christians, members of the church which He built and purchased with His blood.

They have heard and believed the words of Paul when he heaven, should preach unto you any gospel than that which wrote in Galatians 1:8, "But though we, or an angel from we preached unto you, let him be anathema." Will you not today, my friends, search out these peculiar people and become a member of the church which Jesus built, nothing more and nothing less than New Testament Christians?

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